

Untouchable Hoover, FBI Under Fire

By Ken W. Clawson
Washington Post Staff Writer

After decades of near immunity from public criticism, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and its director, J. Edgar Hoover, within the last five months have become a punching bag for an ever-broadening segment of the nation.

The FBI has managed to step from one controversy into another in a manner so uncharacteristic of the agency that it prompted a knowledgeable Justice Department official to remark, "It's almost as if the director pushed the self-destruct button."

Two Democratic presidential hopefuls, Sens. George McGovern and Edmund S. Muskie, have already called for the resignation of the 76-year-old Hoover. His stewardship of the FBI is likely to become an issue in the 1972 campaign.

Criticism also has come from such predictable sources as the peace movement and civil liberties groups as well as from carefully disguised sources within the FBI itself. There is even some grumbling at the White House and the Justice Department.

But despite these signs of growing unhappiness, the nation's No. 1 G-man is currently in no danger of being eased out. Nor is his highly personalized method of running the FBI being challenged.

Sources close to President Nixon and Attorney General John N. Mitchell contend that Hoover "still enjoys the full confidence" of both of them.

One White House source said, "It's



J. EDGAR HOOVER
... his critics are multiplying

axiomatic that in a law-and-order administration, you don't fire your top policeman, especially one with the credentials of Mr. Hoover. He's a great man.

But top administration officials have been irritated with the FBI and Hoover during the past few months because of calamitous events originating with the bureau that have resulted in intense pressure on the government.

The events started Nov. 16, 1970, when Hoover called former Attorney General Ramsey Clark a "jellyfish" and disclosed that he didn't speak to Robert F. Kennedy during his last six months as Attorney General. He also revealed his high regard for Mitchell.

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FBI, From A1

Administration officials were delighted with the vintage Hooverism, but McGovern thought it unseemly and made an initial attack on Hoover that has escalated into open warfare.

Testifies About Plot

Shortly afterwards, Hoover asserted in testimony before a Senate subcommittee that the FBI had uncovered a plot to kidnap a presidential adviser and to blow up government heating plants.

This disclosure, made during the investigatory phase of what later became the Berrigan 6 case, opened the floodgates of criticism. Rep. William Anderson (D-Tenn.) led the attack on Hoover, and explanations varied widely on the reasons for the premature disclosure.

The FBI at first said the testimony was secret and was not intended to be public. But on the day Hoover testified, reporters picked up copies at the Justice Department. Others, however, believe that Hoover misjudged the impact of what he said, and that his normal desire to give a congressional unit "something hot to chew on" during an appropriations hearing was behind the disclosure.

Hoover had already raised hackles in a Dec. 14 interview with Time magazine.

He enraged Spanish-speaking people by saying, "You never have to bother about a President being shot by Puerto Ricans or Mexicans. They don't shoot very straight. But if they come at you with a knife, beware."

The Jan. 12 indictments of the Rev. Phillip Berrigan and five other Catholic anti-war activists was accompanied by charges that the whole thing was staged to get Hoover off the hook for his earlier disclosures.

On Jan. 17, the Los Angeles Times reported that Hoover had blackballed an FBI agent, Jack Shaw, because he had written a letter on the strengths and weaknesses of the FBI to a professor at John Jay College in New York.

The letter, which was never sent, was reconstructed from torn pieces in a wastebasket in the FBI's New York field office. Shaw resigned under pressure after Hoover assigned him

to Butte, Mont., for exhibiting "atrocious judgment."

Shaw, who said he couldn't accept a transfer because his wife was seriously ill, later said he couldn't get another job because his resignation was accepted "with prejudice."

Mrs. Shaw has since died.

Shaw has filed a civil suit against Hoover and other top government officials.

The Shaw incident was grabbed by McGovern as indicative of Hoover's leadership. It also disclosed further dissension within FBI ranks. Ten FBI agents wrote the South Dakota Democrat that Hoover was "stifling" initiative and promoting personal publicity.

Called Opportunist

As McGovern called for a congressional investigation of the bureau, the FBI helped keep the issue alive by sending the senator a letter, signed by 21 senior FBI officials, calling McGovern an irresponsible, reprehensible opportunist.

In the midst of this controversy, it was disclosed that Hoover has been provided with a bulletproof car annually since 1937. Five or six of these vehicles reportedly are on-call for Hoover's use in Washington, New York, Los Angeles and Miami.

According to Rep. John J. Rooney (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee that covers the FBI, the disclosure of the existence of these vehicles has generated more mail to him than any other issue.

Rooney said he is not critical of providing these cars, the last of which cost the government \$27,665. Rooney said that President Johnson used these FBI vehicles occasionally when he was in cities where they are located.

With the Berrigan case and Shaw incident still smoldering, a powerful bomb exploded on the ground floor of the Capitol during the early-morning hours of March 1. The explosion followed by 33 minutes a telephone call to the Capitol saying a bomb had been placed there in "protest of the Nixon involvement in Laos."

The FBI mobilized its

maximum resources to deal with a case that was characterized by President Nixon as a symbolic attack on the foundation of the Republic.

Thirty-six days after the bombing, there have been no arrests. During recent testimony on Capitol Hill, Hoover reported that progress was being made, but he did not give specifics.

The most far-reaching and perhaps most embarrassing incident occurred March 8 when the FBI's Media, Pa., resident agents' office was burglarized and its files stolen.

The extent of the theft —

more than 1,000 documents — was not disclosed until a packet of 14 documents was sent to McGovern, Rep. Parren Mitchell (D-Md.) and three newspapers.

What was made public, according to the Justice Department, were selected files that were designed to create an impression that the FBI is trampling on civil liberties.

Included among the 14 documents, however, is some all-encompassing material like a Nov. 4 Hoover memo that ordered "an increase in both quality and quantity of intelligence information on black student unions and similar groups which are targets for influence and control by violence-prone Black Panther Party and other extremists. Advance information on disorders and violence is of prime importance. We must target informants and sources to develop information regarding these groups on a continuing basis . . ."

Great Restraint

Justice Department officials contend their examination of the reconstructed stolen files show the FBI used great restraint in its intelligence activities and they point out that the stolen files, containing everything from raw intelligence to rumors, was never intended to be used by anybody except the FBI.

One source pointed to a document that appeared to be a policy change permitting the FBI to recruit informers from the age group 18 to 21. He said the directive bears directly on public

criticism that the FBI has not been successful in solving campus-type crimes, such as bombings and arson usually directed at ROTC facilities.

"You can't catch an 18-year-old bomber by using a 25-year-old informer," he said. Although he would not pinpoint the date, he said the order to use younger informers was issued after Mitchell took office.

"What I am telling you is that the FBI didn't tap this age group before. If that isn't restraint, I don't know what is."

Hoover himself has said publicly that there are no FBI agents on the nation's campuses despite widespread belief to the contrary.

Whatever the contents of the stolen documents, the thieves can choose when, where and how many more of the documents they wish to make public.

Justice Department sources, who believe but cannot prove a connection between the Berrigan case, the Capitol bombing and the document thefts, have many theories on how the documents could be used. But a common thread is a goal to undermine and erode the FBI.

"That is why I would not say that at some future date Mr. Hoover might indeed be replaced," one source said. "If the President is faced with a choice of saving the FBI or Mr. Hoover, I'm certain he will save the Bureau."

Rep. Mark Andrews (R-N.D.), a member of Rooney's appropriations subcommittee, said the documents theft is a "deliberate act of anarchists trying to make

the system break down."

In his own dealings with the FBI and Hoover, Andrews says the "outfit is more vigorous and sharper than ever before."

Chairman Rooney, 68, a longtime admirer of the FBI, says he views the Bureau realistically and admits Hoover, Rooney dismissed they make mistakes. "But they're entitled to a few boners once in a while."

Asked about increasing criticism of the Bureau and

McGovern's attacks on grounds that "he's a lightweight."

As for Sen. Muskie, who recently said Hoover should retire and indicated he was responsible for a "clut of personality," Rooney said he nearly wrote the Maine Democrat a letter when he heard of his stand on Hoover.

What he was going to write to Muskie, Rooney said, was "I will not support you for anything."